

Public Outreach Campaign on collecting orphaned ionizing radiation sources as an effective element of building and maintaining nuclear security detection architecture for detecting radioactive materials in illicit circulation

To reduce the amount of abandoned radioactive sources, minimize terrorist threats, as well as threats to life and health of citizens, in Ukraine there was launched the project “Public Outreach and Information Campaign about the Amnesty of Ionizing Radiation Sources”.

Improper handling of ionizing radiation sources (hereinafter IRS) poses a serious danger to human life. The influence of such sources on the human body varies, depending on the intensity and type of radiation. Under certain circumstances, especially in case of misuse, even fatal consequences are possible. Any source outside the specialized enterprise poses a real threat to human life and health. Besides, it may cause unwanted interest. To avoid the threat, orphaned sources must be identified, localized and stored securely.

By today, orphaned IRS are detected in all regions of Ukraine. There were frequent cases when citizens owned IRS, which, for one reason or another, were not included in the state accounting system. However, people were afraid to hand them over, since there was a criminal liability for illegal possession and storage of such sources. Besides, people didn't know where they can surrender IRS. Fear and lack of information prompted people to dump IRS to landfills that are not suited for storing IRS and radioactive waste (RW).

On 4 October 2016, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted Law “On Amendments to Article 265 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine Concerning the Voluntary Handing Over of Radioactive Materials”(No. 1638-VIII, dated 4 October 2016), which exempts from criminal liability for the voluntary handing over of radioactive materials. This has significantly simplified the process of IRS handing over, their registration, inspection and inclusion into the state accounting system, transfer to controlled storage. However, even after this, there was no significant increase in the citizens' actions to hand over ionizing radiation sources. The reason is the lack of a balanced, target audience-oriented public outreach campaign in the regions.

Thus, with the support of the US Department of State and the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, the project “Public Outreach and Information Campaign on the Amnesty Program of Orphaned Ionizing Radiation Sources” was launched. Dnipropetrovsk region is chosen taking into account its developed industry, which is widely using radioactive sources, and therefore there is a high probability of getting them into illegal circulation.”

It is supposed to interest the population in the transfer of sources of ionizing radiation that are not in state registration to state specialized combines. Such sources, after appropriate registration and inspection, will be included in the state register of ionizing radiation sources or in the state register of radioactive waste. These measures will help detect radioactive materials that are in a trafficking and transfer them under regulatory control.

Along with this, preparations are being made for a wide range of informational and explanatory work on harm that may be caused by radioactive materials for human health and the environment if to deal with them in an improper manner. It will be made clear to the public that radioactive material trade is illegal and does not constitute significant value.

State Agency on Exclusion Zone Management has qualified personnel and equipment for the safe identification and extraction of sources, certified vehicles for their safe transportation, as well as places for safe storage of such sources. Ionizing radiation sources will be placed in special repositories equipped with modern physical protection systems, which excludes the possibility of using IRS for criminal, including terrorist purposes.

The goal of the project is to raise public awareness of the danger of seizing and storing IRS and reduce the threat of nuclear terrorism.

The main tasks of the project:

- to develop a culture of behavior and a proactive stance on IRS handling of the public;
- to provide the information on decriminalization in the event of voluntary handing over of IRS (Article 265 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine) to the public;
- to secure the interaction of state authorities liable for responding to the findings of unaccounted IRS;
- to develop informational material for raising awareness of the population about IRS handling.

The project consists of 9 tasks that contain 23 subtasks. By today, information on the IRS of the Dnipropetrovsk region has been collected, departmental documents have been analyzed and there were created interdepartmental working groups. A detailed “Public Outreach and Information Campaign Plan” has been developed, identifying four target audiences, five public awareness criteria, criteria for assessing the success of the campaign, and means and types of communication.

The project in the Dnipropetrovsk region is a pilot one. In case of its successful result the same campaigns will be held in other regions of Ukraine.

Gender

Female

State

Ukraine

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